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DE RUEHAK #1805/01 2910425

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FM AMEMBASSY ANKARA

TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 7700

INFO RUEHEE/ARAB LEAGUE COLLECTIVE

RUEHZL/EUROPEAN POLITICAL COLLECTIVE

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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 ANKARA 001805

SIPDIS

DEPARTMENT ALSO FOR EUR/SE

E.O. 12958: DECL: 10/16/2018

TAGS: [PREL](#) [PGOV](#) [AL](#) [TU](#)

SUBJECT: TURKEY WOOS ARAB LEAGUE FOR SUPPORT ON MIDDLE EAST SECURITY AND COOPERATION INITIATIVE

REF: A. ANKARA 1694

[B.](#) ANKARA 129

Classified By: POL Counselor Daniel O'Grady, for reasons 1.4 (b,d)

[11.](#) (C) SUMMARY: The GOT continues to move forward with its Middle East outreach proposals -- the Turkey-Arab League Forum and the Conference on Security and Cooperation in the Middle East (CSCME) -- with only minimal results. Contrary to expectations, President Gul did not outline Turkey's CSCME proposal during his UNGA address, opting instead to encourage regional nations to consider signing-up to a vaguely described "collective arrangement." The CSCME also became a footnote in an arduously negotiated joint statement at the October 11 inaugural Turkey-Arab League Forum ministerial. While the GOT has gained initial Arab League buy-in for the CSCME concept, both the organization and its members appear to be reserving further commitment until Turkey provides a more concrete vision. END SUMMARY.

[12.](#) (C) Following President Gul's call for Middle Eastern countries to consider a "collective arrangement for conflict prevention and resolution" during his September 24 UNGA address, the GOT is pushing forward its plans to establish the Conference on Security and Cooperation in the Middle East (CSCME). Although the GOT originally envisioned Gul's speech would outline a definitive way ahead, the final version only introduced the concept in very general terms (REF A). Meanwhile, GOT continues to focus its efforts on gaining Arab League buy-in, according to MFA Middle East desk officer Murat Omeroglu.

[13.](#) (C) Egyptian Embassy First Secretary Ihab Soliman told us that President Gul first pitched the CSCME to Arab League Secretary Amr Moussa in January (REF B). While the Arab League officially blessed the CSCME during its September Foreign Ministers meeting, the organization has withheld any firm commitment to participate until the GOT better fleshes out its proposal. Nevertheless, the GOT had hoped to capitalize on the inaugural Turkey-Arab League Forum to gain additional support.

Focus on Joint Statement Text

[14.](#) (C) On October 11 in Istanbul, Foreign Minister Babacan hosted Arab League representatives Syrian FM Muallem (Arab League Summit President), Troika representatives Saudi Arabian Foreign Minister Saud el Faisal, Djiboutian Foreign Minister Ali Youssef, and Algerian State Minister and Special Presidential Representative Abdelaziz Belkhadem, and

Secretary General Amr Moussa. Omeroglu reported the one-day meeting focused almost exclusively on negotiating the joint statement text, which swelled from the 22 proposed Turkish paragraphs to 43. (Note: The document in its entirety is available in the press and information section of the MFA's homepage <http://www.mfa.gov.tr>.)

15. (C) Omeroglu noted each foreign minister brought his own country's agenda to the table including such anomalistic language as an endorsement of a constructive dialogue between Eritrea and Djibouti. Arab League representatives also introduced Darfur language. The final Turkey-Arab League Joint Statement, however, offered relatively constructive language on the Arab-Israeli conflict, expressing support for the Annapolis process and calling for a comprehensive and lasting solution. Despite heavy pressure from the Arab League representatives to include criticisms of Israel, Omeroglu said the GOT refused to significantly alter the original draft's tone. He added that Iraq language was lifted almost directly from previous Iraqi Neighbors communiqués. Turkey also introduced the paragraph expressing concern over recent developments in Georgia. Arab League representatives insisted on removing language calling for respect of Georgia's territorial integrity, Omeroglu noted.

16. (C) Omeroglu told us the original draft joint statement text included more definitive CSCME language, but was subsequently altered to reflect President Gul's UNGA speech. In the end, the document reflected the Arab League's "welcoming in principle" of President Gul's CSCME initiative and agreed to pursue further consultations in paragraph 31.

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With the focus on negotiating the joint statement, Omeroglu reported the GOT and Arab League representatives spent little time discussing Turkey-Arab League Forum modalities. The Ministers agreed to create a task force which would develop an action plan prior to the next Turkey-Arab League Forum ministerial to be held in six months. The Saudi Arabian delegation reportedly insisted the task force be established no later than November, prior to the end of its Arab League Ministerial Council Presidency.

Israeli Participation?

17. (C) Potential members, however, remain skeptical of the CSCME's utility. Israeli Embassy Spokesman Amit Zarouk told us that during the MFA's CSCME briefing to Israeli Ambassador Gabi Levi one week prior to Gul's UNGA speech, Deputy Director General for Middle East Omer Onhon reportedly said the Arab League maintains working level reservations about Israeli participation. The Arab League had expressed concerns that engaging Israel before achieving progress on core issues (Jerusalem, refugees, settlements, security, borders, and water) could give the wrong impression of normalization. Nevertheless, Zarouk said Onhon urged the GOI to include language supporting the CSCME in President Peres' UNGA speech. Ambassador Levy responded that the GOI would first need time to evaluate the proposal before making any formal commitments. Given the current political situation in Israel, Levy warned that the GOI would not likely sign on without a better defined vision. Soliman added the GOE has yet to determine if it would participate in the CSCME, noting serious questions in the Egyptian MFA as to whether such an organization would contribute any added value or simply distract from other established peace tracks.

18. (C) Comment: In its efforts to boost its credibility as a regional player, the GOT appears to have launched two intentionally benign initiatives without first testing their relative buoyancy. It remains unclear as to why President Gul decided not to push for the CSCME at UNGA, but reports indicate the GOT is having difficulties gaining firm commitments from potential members without a substantive roadmap. From the Turkey-Arab League Forum communiqué, GOT received lip service for the CSCME concept as well as formal Arab League support for many of its recent foreign policy

endeavors including its UNSC non-permanent member bid, the Turkey-African Union Summit, Alliance of Civilizations, Israel-Syria talks, and Cyprus negotiations as well as a condemnation of the PKK. Nevertheless, the inaugural Ministerial rendered nothing of consequence, much less a better understanding of the Forum itself.

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